

Copyright
by
Lynda Myrtha Gonzalez
2019

**The Report Committee for Lynda Myrtha Gonzalez
Certifies that this is the approved version of the following report:**

**A Boulevard in Transition:
Migrant Placemaking in North Austin**

**APPROVED BY
SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:**

Mary M. Rivas-Rodriguez, Supervisor

Donna De Cesare, Co-Supervisor

**A Boulevard in Transition:
Migrant Placemaking in North Austin**

by

Lynda Myrtha Gonzalez

Report

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
The University of Texas at Austin
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degrees of

Master of Arts

and

Master of Arts

The University of Texas at Austin

May 2019

Dedication

Para mis padres, mis abuelos, mis ancestros y Dios. Les quiero, y siempre estaré agradecida por el don de la resistencia y la capacidad de soñar.

For Ramon, Mirta and Daniel. Y'all are my everything.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to many people whose time and talents contributed to telling this story. I extend my deepest gratitude to:

First and foremost, Ernesto and Armida Guerra. Their endless generosity, encouragement, and kindness served as a constant inspiration to tell this story. Que Dios los bendiga.

Dr. Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez for believing in this story. Her enthusiasm for untold narratives has forever shaped my own storytelling ambitions. She edited this piece with a keen eye and soft heart, and she ultimately taught me to “embrace the flounder!”

Donna De Cesare for inspiring me to produce meaningful work. Her thoughtful attention to craft shaped my approach in representing the North Lamar migrant communities with the utmost dignity.

Mami, Daddy, and Daniel. Mami, thank you for the many prayers shared over the phone and for modeling true love for me. Daddy, I will always cherish the memory of you approaching Ernesto to introduce me. You got this story off the ground for me when I thought it would never take flight. Daniel, thank you for always believing in me, and remember that I will always believe in you.

Abstract

A Boulevard in Transition: Migrant Placemaking in North Austin

Lynda Myrtha Gonzalez, M.A., M.A.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2019

Supervisor: Mary M. Rivas-Rodriguez

Co-Supervisor: Donna De Cesare

The low-income and ethnically diverse neighborhoods of North Lamar Boulevard have not received the kinds of city-backed economic development efforts that have revamped other areas of Austin like the Mueller Airport development, South Congress Avenue, or East 12th street. As the city nears the 1 million population mark, local public attention has centered around the East-West divide of segregation and gentrification. Young, white-collar professionals have migrated to the city's urban core in the last decade, and commercial and residential development has reshaped East Austin to accommodate the tastes of these new middle- and high-income earners.

The neighborhoods that surround North Lamar Boulevard in the city's far northern sector have, for the most part, dodged this fate. Instead, it grapples with other obstacles. Sidewalks in the Rundberg neighborhood remain in disrepair. Local

news media coverage routinely casts the area as crime-ridden. Residents wish that city buses in these neighborhoods provided reliable and frequent service.

Despite these community challenges, immigrant business owners and residents have taken it upon themselves to personalize the North Lamar neighborhood to their own liking: the facade of one restaurant, Mariscos Los Jarochos, features elaborate woodwork; across the street, another building showcases Mexican murals and artisanal masonry. In the evening, families stroll North Lamar to eat dinner at any number of taco trucks or to buy a refreshing raspa, or snow cone. The utilization and remaking of space in the North Lamar neighborhood by immigrant communities foster a sense of belonging, especially as city development efforts in the area have dragged on for the past decade and other needs remain unmet.

Table of Contents

Text.....	1
Photographs	13
Daily Life along North Lamar Boulevard	13
El “Todólogo”: Building Taquería Guadalajara La Alteñita.....	25
Vita	37

The international migrant communities of the North Lamar neighborhood claim their space in a shifting city landscape.

Three young Latino men enter Los Buhos Sports Bar in North Austin on West Rundberg Lane on a Friday night in late February. Each dons a pair of crisp denim jeans, a clean T-shirt, and a pair of boots meant for a nice night out.

They've gone to the trouble of dressing up because they've stepped into a family environment, said Los Buhos owner Adrian Rodriguez, 42. Originally from Mexico City, Rodriguez renovated the restaurant to make it look better than "just any ordinary box."

"I decided to get some art and paintings in here to make it look different and unique," Rodriguez said. "We also expanded the menu and marketed on Facebook to attract all kinds of people to come here."

Ernesto Guerra, the architect who led the restaurant's redesign, painted large murals depicting athletes and various owls – "buhos" is the Spanish word for the bird. Guerra also crafted a modest dance floor and designed the multi-colored lighting that illuminates the place.

"As soon as we changed the physical image of what this restaurant used to be, we saw a change in the kind of clients who came here," said Guerra. "Before, workers would come straight from the construction site or other labor jobs and go straight there with their dirty work clothes."

Now, entire families go to the restaurant to enjoy televised sports, live music and a series of custom wall murals painted by Guerra. The glare of dozens of flat-screen TVs along with plush chairs, low to the ground and in the shape of soccer and

tennis balls, create a lively atmosphere for the Mexican families who most frequent Los Buhos.

By transforming the restaurant in early 2018, Guerra said that Rodriguez wanted to uplift the existing image about the North Austin neighborhood along Rundberg Lane at the time. Only a few years have passed since violence and drug-related crime defined the neighborhood, a place that houses low-income and ethnically diverse populations.

In 2013, however, the reputation of this North Austin community began to change when the million-dollar, three-year grant period of the Restore Rundberg program began, designed to prioritize crime reduction in the area. While city leaders pushed for an increase in police foot patrols, local stakeholders sought to influence the neighborhood in their own way.

For restaurant owners like Rodriguez, that meant a drastic renovation. Los Buhos first began as a neighborhood dive bar that women didn't feel safe in or welcome at, Rodriguez said. It was at Guerra's urging that Rodriguez began to believe a transformation of the physical building would encourage a change in the atmosphere of the place.

The low-income and ethnically diverse neighborhoods of North Lamar Boulevard have not received the kinds of city-backed economic development efforts that have revamped other areas of Austin like the Mueller Airport development, South Congress Avenue, or East 12th street. As the city nears the 1 million population mark, local public attention has centered around the East-West divide of segregation and gentrification. Young, white-collar professionals have migrated to the city's urban core in the last decade, and commercial and residential

development has reshaped East Austin to accommodate the tastes of these new middle- and high-income earners.

The neighborhoods that surround North Lamar Boulevard in the city's far northern sector have, for the most part, dodged this fate. Still, sidewalks in the Rundberg neighborhood remain in disrepair. Local news media coverage routinely casts the area as crime-ridden. Residents wish that city buses in these neighborhoods provided reliable and frequent service, as documented by citizen survey responses for Connections 2025, Capital Metro's 10-year transit plan for the future.

Despite these community challenges, immigrant business owners and residents have taken it upon themselves to personalize the North Lamar neighborhood to their own liking: the facade of one restaurant, Mariscos Los Jarochos, features elaborate woodwork; across the street, another building showcases Mexican murals and artisanal masonry. In the evening, families stroll North Lamar to eat dinner at any number of taco trucks or to buy a refreshing raspa, or snow cone. The utilization and remaking of space in the North Lamar neighborhood by immigrant communities foster a sense of belonging, especially as city development efforts in the area have dragged on for the past decade and other needs remain unmet.

Tucked Away, Out-of-Sight

Nestled between Rundberg and Braker lanes, the North Lamar neighborhood bustles with activity each evening and especially on the weekends. One recent evening, a woman, who appeared in her 30s, and a boy, maybe 10 years old, ate

tacos and sipped from imported glass bottles of Mexican Coca-Cola as they waited for a south-bound bus. Across the street, a sculptor shaped a three-dimensional mural of agave harvesters on the front-facing facade of a new restaurant.

The North Lamar neighborhood is tucked away in a corner between the U.S. 183 and Interstate 35 corridors, just out of sight enough for those whose primary vision of Austin is that of young, progressive hipsters jogging along a lake or attending a music festival. Yet this parcel of jigsaw neighborhoods is home to an array of immigrant and refugee populations that also call Austin home.

Two-thirds of the people living in the four census tracts that make up this area identify as Hispanic or Latino, according to 2017 American Community Survey data. Of the residents over the age of 18, only 43 percent identified as U.S. citizens, suggesting that foreign-born people could make up as much as half of the population in the North Lamar neighborhood.

Clusters of mom and pop stores along North Lamar point to the patchwork of ethnic communities in the area: Ethiopian, Vietnamese, and Burmese, among many others.

“It is beautifully, wonderfully diverse in culture and in language,” said Monica Guzman, a longtime resident and activist for the North Lamar and Rundberg neighborhoods. “You can learn so much about other places halfway across the world without ever having to leave Austin.”

One of the only physical manifestations of city investment in the area is that of the small public library branch obscured behind a strip mall and a crowded H-E-B grocery store. The monochromatic tan, carpeted interior of the Little Walnut Creek Branch makes it seem like as if it could be a set in a 1980s period film. The library is

often busy, especially when school lets out – a group of middle school and high school students will walk there to use the free Wi-Fi. On Tuesdays, immigrants attend free citizenship classes and practice speaking English. The library's ten, modest Windows PCs are almost always occupied, and people wait at nearby tables for one to become available.

The Austin Public Library system has 20 city branches, and the Little Walnut Creek branch is one of a handful that serve a predominately low-income and minority population. Although its last major renovations were in 2009, it still feels like a building built in 1979: it needs a new roof and an interior update, but its biggest problem is the lack of an accessible entrance ramp because it was built before the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

"We get people coming all the time who need those accommodations, and they really struggle to get inside," said APL administrative assistant Vanessa Bissereth.

Library leadership announced in February that it was exploring options for allocating funds to pay for repairs.

Bissereth, who puts her age at 29, said that the surrounding neighborhood is home to both aging and immigrant populations because it's one of the last affordable sectors of the city to live in. According to 2017 ACS data, median gross monthly housing rent in the North Lamar area hovered around the \$1,000 mark, compared to downtown rates of nearly \$1,900.

Since their migration from Haiti to Austin in the early '90s, Bissereth's family has moved several times throughout the city due to rising rental costs. Their latest move brought them to the North Lamar area in 2013 from where they had previously lived in the University Hills area of Northeast Austin.

“My mom moves when gentrification starts to happen,” Bissereth said, adding that a former apartment landlord of theirs resented low-income tenants with Section 8 federal housing assistance vouchers. He preferred to lease units at higher prices to middle-class earners, she said. The move to the Rundberg area meant that Bissereth’s family could afford to rent an entire house – albeit an aging structure that she says needs repairs.

“These are the only places my family could ever afford to live in,” she said.

Public Perception and a Complicated Relationship with Law Enforcement

Vanessa Bissereth is studying for a bachelor’s in social work at The University of Texas and has worked at the Little Walnut Creek library branch for the last year. She asked to work at this branch not only because of its proximity to her home, but because she connects with the community that it serves. Working with this working-class, diverse population has influenced her future career goal of creating a nonprofit to serve this area of the city.

On a recent Saturday afternoon, she looks out the front-facing window of the library. A cluster of people gathers on either side of the road, waiting for the 831 and 832 buses. Those, she said, usually run behind schedule.

“It’s just dirty,” she said, referring to the neighborhood’s physical state. “Just look at the condition of the sidewalks. The street lights are few and far between. And then you go to other neighborhoods, like Mueller, which isn’t even that far away from here, but it feels like an entirely different place.”

A preliminary internet search about the North Lamar area brings up a mix of real estate listings, fatal car accidents, and the occasional crime report. It also yields:

“Rundberg - too crazy?” – a post on Reddit.com where users debate the safety of the neighborhood and whether or not it’s a viable place to raise a family.

“I’ve heard terrible things about the area,” the author of the original post wrote.

Before the Restore Rundberg program began in 2013, the neighborhood was “statistically the largest crime hot spot of Austin,” according to the 2016 Restore Rundberg final report and replication guide written by a team of social work researchers at The University of Texas. The nearly six-square-mile sector accounted for almost 13 percent of the city’s violent crime, even though it only had 5 percent of the city’s residents.

The report attributed drug and sex work activity to various conditions such as poor road organization, “a strip of inexpensive hotels,” and a 25-acre plot of undeveloped land. But in the six years leading up to 2016, the Rundberg sector experienced a decrease in violent crime by 53 percent, according to the final report’s analysis.

Although the three-year grant period of the program brought stakeholders together with city officials and police to reduce crime, it can still feel as if outsiders think neighborhood as a dangerous place,

“It frustrates me that Rundberg is a four-letter word,” said Guzman, who served as the Place 3 representative for the Restore Rundberg Revitalization Team. “To say ‘Rundberg’ is to summon an image of the bad part of the town, and it’s not. We are not unique to the city in terms of crime.”

Bissereth believes the area continues to carry this reputation for other reasons.

“Austin doesn't care about Rundberg unless it's over-policing them, because they treat poverty like it's a crime,” Bissereth said.

And she would know.

In early 2016, Austin police fatally shot Bissereth's unarmed 17-year-old cousin, David Joseph, in the street of the North Austin neighborhood where he lived. Joseph's high-profile death drew public outrage from the community. Although the officer responsible for killing Joseph, Geoffrey Freeman, was ultimately no-billed by a grand jury, he was fired from the force and the City of Austin agreed to a \$3.25 million settlement to Joseph's family. But Bissereth says it's an empty gesture.

“Settlements aren't accountability,” she said. “It's like saying, ‘We're not going to hold this person accountable, but here's some money and maybe you'll be less miserable? Maybe money can substitute for a human life?’”

In one effort to enhance police accountability, the Austin City Council replaced the position of police monitor with the Office of Police Oversight in late 2018. This move allowed the division's director, Farah Muscadin, to overhaul the complaint process for people to report their interactions with police. Locals can now submit anonymous complaints, and the office can create a complaint on behalf of someone who may be too afraid to do so. Muscadin has also prioritized transparency. She said that her office can now make more information public on their website, like policy recommendations and case summaries of high-profile incidents – such as officer-involved shootings.

During the restructuring process, Muscadin said one of the biggest complaints from residents was the lack of community engagement by the police monitor. With the new oversight office, Muscadin has reshaped engagement from “a grassroots perspective” with the help of an expanded team of staff.

“It became very apparent to me that we needed to be out in the community much more than had ever been done in the history of the police monitor,” Muscadin said, adding that she has hired two specialists and two interns for the task. “A community engagement team is so crucial because they’re the ones on the ground, letting people know all these many ways they can notify us if they have a great or bad experience.”

Placemaking Among a Collision of Cultures

Just south of the intersection of Rundberg Lane and North Lamar Boulevard sits the new building of Taquería Guadalajara Mexican restaurant in its final stages of construction. It is a grandiose two-story, 4000-square-foot concrete structure. It overshadows a T-Mobile store beside it, and a Cricket Wireless shop across the street.

The upper half of the building features a three-dimensional concrete rendering of a working jimador, the Spanish word for a Mexican agave harvester. A sculpted sombrero shades the man’s head, and his wide-eyed gaze will one day welcome the future patrons who pass through the grand entryway below him. Inside, murals depict festive folklórico dancers, cathedrals, and Mexican artists like José Clemente Orozco and Frida Kahlo.

Owner Omar Bobadilla decided to tear down Taquería Guadalajara in 2018; he had plans to make it bigger, better and even more representative of the culture that exists in his home state of Jalisco, in Mexico.

“I wanted to create a new image for the restaurant and in this particular zone, which has a lot of commercial traffic and business,” Bobadilla said in Spanish.

“My hope is for the Hispanic community, as well as others, to see that something so beautiful can exist in this part of the city.”

Bobadilla isn't alone in his endeavor to pay cultural homage with his business. Mariscos Los Jarochos, a restaurant located just across the street in the Carillon Center shopping center, has undergone a steady renovation as well. An immigrant from the Mexican state of Veracruz, the previous owner spent the past few years transforming the bland strip mall exterior of the restaurant with his woodworking craftsmanship.

The business-owners and residents of the Rundberg area aren't solely from the Latino community. Just next door at the Northgate Shopping Center, the Halal Indo Pak Grill entices visitors with custom diamond-shaped windows. The Pakistani owners asked a friend to design custom counters along with laser-cut wooden partitions and booths for the restaurant's interior. Down the road at the MT Supermarket in Austin's Chinatown sector, red roofing and signage signal good fortune to the city's Asian population. Even the building's westward facing entrance reflects a thoughtful feng shui design choice.

The placemaking practices of immigrant business owners in the North Lamar commercial district speaks to the area's reputation as Austin's most international district. Census data shows that many nationalities co-exist in the North Lamar commercial district. University of Texas architecture professor Sarah Lopez writes that this area is Austin's "most cosmopolitan district...defined by transnational capital" flowing from places as far as Asia, the Middle East and Latin America.

Anywhere between 6,000 and 36,000 vehicles traverse the six miles of North Lamar Boulevard on any given day, according to the city's 2013 North Lamar and Burnet Road Corridor Report. This far north extension of the boulevard offers

commuters a way to avoid Interstate 35 during rush hours, but a significant amount of those living along this stretch don't own an automobile. They instead depend on public transportation, cycling or walking to get around. For this reason, the city allocated a voter-approved \$15 million bond in 2012 to address improvements to the North Lamar pedestrian walkways. Yet the research and planning for this endeavor eventually became the basis for developing a larger, city council-approved Corridor Construction Program in 2018, after voters passed a new \$720 million mobility bond in 2016. Any physical work to the North Lamar Boulevard corridor has been a slow-moving, bureaucratic process that has left residents wondering when visible changes will occur. The City of Austin website reports the project is in the design phase, and actual construction should begin by 2021.

Despite the languid timeline for improving the North Lamar corridor, the international residents of the area have taken it upon themselves to make changes where they can. In late March, The North Lamar International District Merchants Association and city officials installed a new gateway to highlight the range of multicultural restaurants and businesses in this area. The gateway includes a colorful array of international flags from all of the communities that call North Lamar home.

Guzman fears that this neighborhood could someday lose its ethnic diversity in business and communities if "Austin's rapid, unmanaged growth" brings gentrification to the area.

For now, the looming threat of major gentrification has yet to fully manifest here like it has in East and South Austin. It's possible it could reach the Rundberg neighborhoods, but there's no clear indication of how or when it would begin.

In the meantime, working class families enjoy the North Lamar area for what it is now, not what it could it be. In the spring, weekend yard sales pepper the neighborhood as the smoky aromas of carne asada permeate the air. Hijab-wearing mothers leisurely push strollers while running errands at a bustling strip mall. Families flock to Marketplace Austin – an indoor flea market – to buy glittering Mary Janes for a daughter’s First Communion.

When Bissereth looks out the window of the Walnut Creek Library one Sunday evening, she notes her favorite thing about her community.

“The people,” she says with an audible ache in her response. “It’s a community of survivors. You’re in the place where everybody’s been given the least, but they get up and give the best and most that they can give every single day.”

Photographs

Daily Life along North Lamar Boulevard



Photograph 1: A warning sign to a scooter thief rests against a trailer in a front yard of the North Lamar neighborhood of North Austin, Texas. The area has a decade-long reputation for high crime incidents but has seen a decrease since the three-year, federally funded “Restore Rundberg” community initiative took place from 2013-2016.



Photograph 2: A group of young men walk past an empty plot of land in the North Lamar neighborhood in March 2019, in Austin, Texas. A final report about the Restore Rundberg initiative said that neglected aspects of the area, like undeveloped land, makes it easier for drug- and prostitution-related crimes to take place.



Photograph 3: Juan Lopez, 20, tries on a new pair of work boots for his construction job while shopping at the Marketplace Austin indoor flea market. Lopez works by building houses with fellow Guatemalans who have recently arrived in the U.S.



Photograph 4: Virginia Padillo, the shopkeeper at a clothing store at Marketplace Austin, helps Juan Lopez, 20, shop for new construction boots on April 20, 2019. "It's important to find ones that don't lose traction right away," she said.



Photograph 5: A man walks past a display of First Communion dresses at an indoor flea market on April 20, 2019, in Austin, Texas. The North Lamar neighborhood has a large Latin American community, and many residents practice Catholicism.



Photograph 6: Henry Granado, 59, shows his ring collection that he wears to work at Marketplace Austin in the North Lamar neighborhood. Born and raised in Austin, Granado said that he's witnessed swift changes to the areas surrounding the neighborhood, like increased traffic and rising apartment costs.



Photograph 7: A woman threads a customer's eyebrow at an indoor flea market in the North Lamar neighborhood of Austin, Texas.



Photograph 8: Agustín, originally from Reynosa, in Northern Mexico, wears a gold pendant of Jesus Christ around his neck during Easter weekend in 2019.



Photograph 9: Martha, originally from the Mexican state of Michoacán, sells piñatas and cascarones on the side of North Lamar Boulevard for the Easter holiday. She said she does the job to get extra money, and her regular employment is as a custodian at a nearby asylum. She recently moved from the neighborhood because her monthly apartment rent increased by \$200.



Photograph 10: Agustín, originally from Reynosa in Mexico, helps his longtime partner sell piñatas and cascarones on the side of the road in North Austin, Texas, during Easter weekend in 2019. The two had to move from the neighborhood because they could no longer afford rising rent costs. Agustín works as a construction site painter, and his partner works as a custodian.



Photograph 11: An unattended yard sale contains an assortment of women's shoes and children's toys in the North Lamar neighborhood of Austin, Texas.



Photograph 12: A man walks by the Viking Villa apartment complex in the North Lamar neighborhood on March 9, 2019.

El “Todólogo”: Building Taquería Guadalajara La Alteñita



Photograph 13: Ernesto Guerra, right, and his brother create custom concrete molds for the facade of the Taquería Guadalajara Mexican restaurant on North Lamar Boulevard on March 9, 2019, in Austin, Texas. Guerra, an architect and interior designer, leads the renovation of the restaurant. He aims for the space to be an authentic representation of Mexican culture for the city.



Photograph 14: Guerra stands in front of the Taquería Guadalajara Mexican restaurant on March 7, 2019, in Austin, Texas. The original building was demolished in late summer of 2018, and the new building will be ready by summer 2019, said owner Omar Bobadilla. Both the inside and outside of the building are marked by Guerra's custom concrete and painted designs.



Photograph 15: Guerra paints the front entrance doors of Taquería Guadalajara Mexican restaurant on April 21, 2019, in North Austin, Texas. In addition to sculpting and painting, Guerra also built the doors and used hubcaps from construction machinery to give them a rustic feel. The North Lamar restaurant will stand as a tribute to the Mexican state of Jalisco, Guerra said.



Photograph 16: Guerra hand-makes each mold for every concrete structure inside and outside of the restaurant building of Taquería Guadalajara Mexican restaurant. "Each restaurant I work on has a theme, and there has to be a cohesiveness in the elements I include," he said in Spanish. "This restaurant will represent all of the complexities of Mexican culture as it exists in the state of Jalisco." The restaurant will feature a life-size statue of a folklórico dancer, a bas-relief mural, and a massive sculpture of agave harvesters.



Photograph 17: Architect Ernesto Guerra stands for a portrait in front of Taquería Guadalajara Mexican restaurant. The North Lamar establishment is undergoing renovations as its owner aims to designate his restaurant as a representation of Mexican culture in this area of North Austin, Texas.



Photograph 18: Guerra sketches the design for indoor bas-relief murals that will cover the walls of the Taquería Guadalajara Mexican restaurant in North Austin, Texas. Guerra, who has designed nearly half a dozen Mexican restaurants in the greater Austin metropolitan area, incorporates different regional themes for each locale. This restaurant will showcase folklórico dancers and agave harvesters as a tribute to the Jalisco state in Western Mexico.



Photograph 19: Guerra begins to paint the bas-relief indoor mural of Taquería Guadalajara Mexican restaurant on March 9, 2019, in Austin, Texas. The restaurant is undergoing renovations in order to create a vivid experience for customers, Guerra said.



Photograph 20: Educated as an architect, Guerra has many skills in indoor and outdoor building design. "I call him the 'todólogo,'" his wife, Armida, said in Spanish. The word is a Spanish play-on-words equivalent to "jack-of-all-trades" in English.



Photograph 21: Guerra works on the main attraction of Taquería Guadalajara Mexican restaurant in North Austin, Texas. The North Lamar establishment will feature a large cement sculpture of agave harvesters painted in varying shades of bronze.



Photograph 22: Guerra photographs the main attraction of Taquería Guadalajara Mexican restaurant in North Austin, Texas. The sculpture took Guerra more than three months to complete. "The art in this restaurant isn't just beautiful, it also has meaning," he said in Spanish. "The agave harvesters are a point of pride for the state of Jalisco, which is known for producing tequila."



Photograph 23: Guerra spent more than three months working on the main attraction of Taquería Guadalajara Mexican restaurant in North Austin, Texas. A bronze-painted, large cement sculpture of agave harvesters will welcome visitors to the restaurant when the establishment re-opens in early summer 2019.



Photograph 24: Guerra and other contractors work to finish the reconstruction of Taquería Guadalajara Mexican restaurant in North Austin, Texas. The North Lamar establishment will stand as a tribute to the Mexican state of Jalisco, Guerra said. "One feels a tremendous sense of pride when finishing a new building," he added. But his favorite part of the renovation? The entryway statue. "It was a big endeavor, and to see it in its final stages is something special."

Vita

Lynda Myrtha Gonzalez was born during peak citrus season in Weslaco, Texas, in the Rio Grande Valley borderlands. She was raised in the Texas Hill Country and graduated from Tivy High School in 2008. She attended The University of Texas at Austin, where she was a Bill Archer Fellow. She received a Bachelor of Journalism with an international relations certificate in 2012. After graduation, she became a Teach For America 2012 corps member in the Rio Grande Valley, where she worked as a high school photojournalism teacher at Harlingen High School for four magical years. She returned to The University of Texas at Austin in 2016 to enter the dual master's degree program in visual journalism and Latin American Studies. Bright-eyed, she looks forward to what comes next.

Permanent email: lyndamgonzalez@gmail.com

This report was typed by the author.